

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF SAIVA SIDDHANTA.

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Saiva Siddhanta is a neglected branch of Indian philosophy. It is written in high-class Tamil and is difficult even for the most trained scholar to understand. Much of the literature on the subject is inscribed on cajan leaves (¹). The native instinct of conservatism which is almost insurmountable, and the desire to preserve this literature as the property of the Thiruvaduthurai Mutt (²) where it is deposited, coupled with a jealous guard over strangers who go in quest of the knowledge, have acted as clogs on the appreciation and propagation of this branch of learning. The student who wishes to be initiated into its study is obliged to observe certain disciplinary formalities and undergo a regular course of systematic training to get upadesa (initiation) even as a student of Sanskrit in a Brahmin Veda Patasala.

Indeed Saiva Siddhanta is the Veda for the Saiva sect of South India, which is comprised mostly of non-Brahmins. History has it that Siva imparted the Vedagamas for the salvation of finite souls. Vedagama is Veda plus Agama. Veda, according to Saiva Siddhanta, means the weapon or the instrument of knowledge of Pāthi (God), Pāsu (Soul), and Pāsām (Senses). Āgāma means that which has descended from God. It may also be understood as Ā meaning Pāsām, gā meaning Pāsu and mā meaning Pāthi; that is, the sastra or code that explains the qualities of Pāthi, Pāsu, and Pāsām. There is still another interpretation. Ā may be taken to mean Sivagnana, gā as moksha, and mā as destruction of the senses, in which case Agama may be taken to mean the sastra that inculcates the knowledge of God to the souls by the destruction of the senses.

(¹) In olden days when paper was not manufactured, Indians used palmryah leaves in its place, and instead of writing with pen and ink they inscribed letters on the leaves with an iron style pen. These leaves when bundled up and tied by a string formed volumes by themselves even as books of modern days. All the original works of the olden days are found only in such volumes and these are carefully preserved for generations and are less easily susceptible to the destructive work of the white ants than paper.

(²) This is a rich Mutt situated about three miles from Narasingampet railway station, in South India. Its origin is to be traced to about 1200 A.D. It is presided over by a Sanyasin called Pandarasannadhi who is the spiritual head of all the Saivites and under whose control all the properties of the Mutt are placed. Some literature is also to be found in the Dharmapuram Mutt about two miles distant from Mayavaram railway station of the S. I. Railway in the Suryanarkoil Mutt in Thirumangalakudi about three miles distant from Aduthurai railway station of the S. I. Railway; in Vellaichandanam Mutt in Nachiarcoil about six miles distant from Kumbakonam railway station of the S. I. Railway; in the Annappanpettai Mutt about two miles distant from Mariammancoil railway station in the Tanjore-Nagore line of the S. I. Railway, and in the Mutt presided over by Hajapanatesa Pandarassannadhi in Tiruvvarur in S. I., but the quantity of literature is practically negligible when compared with that of the Thiruvaduthurai Mutt.